

First WiFi City in America: Grand Haven goes Wireless

August 1 2004



Heralding in a new era of city-wide WiFi Internet access, Grand Haven, Mich., Mayor Roger Bergman today announced the completion and full operation of the nation's first city-wide WiFi broadband network. Other cities have announced intent to build similar networks or have announced partial deployments; in contrast, the Grand Haven implementation, by Ottawa Wireless Inc., is the first full and complete city-wide WiFi deployment in the country.

“As the first WiFi city in America, Grand Haven has truly lived up to its name in the Internet era, as we now allow anyone anywhere to connect to the Internet and roam the city and waterways in a completely secure

computing environment,” Mayor Bergman said. “The city-wide WiFi service provided by Ottawa Wireless is already enhancing the quality of life for residents and tourists and enabling the city to provide new services.”

Developed and managed by Ottawa Wireless, a leading provider of wireless Internet access solutions to business and local government, the system uses several hundred WiFi (802.11a, b, g) radios strategically located upon the city infrastructure to blanket its six square miles and provide coverage 15 miles into Lake Michigan. WiFi, for wireless fidelity, is a technology that gives users the freedom to receive and transmit data over the Internet at high speeds from anywhere within the broadcast signal range. Voice over IP (VOIP) Internet-based phone service is also available on the new network.

The city-wide WiFi service, which began commercial operation on a smaller scale in the fall of 2003, represents a technology first for Ottawa Wireless, which also is developing many other community-wide WiFi “hot cities” across the Midwest.

“While a few other cities have announced their intent to build similar networks, Grand Haven is the first to provide access across the entire city limits, making it America’s first ‘hot city,’” said Ottawa Wireless CEO Tyler van Houwelingen, a former Intel engineer and McKinsey & Company technology consultant.

“Grand Haven demonstrates how the public and private sectors can work together to provide an entire city and everyone within its limits with more affordable, easy-to-access Internet service,” he added. “This is a proud moment for Grand Haven, and the benefits of anytime-anywhere Internet access are being enjoyed by every facet of our town, from tourists, boaters, and residents to businesses and municipal agencies. Already with more than 300 customers, this WiFi service is having a

dramatic impact on the way people work, play and communicate around town. Its benefits are many, as it enables new public security services, attracts businesses, boosts tourism, and supports education.”

Grand Haven, population 12,000, has more than 2 million visitors each year. Some hotels and marinas subsidize the wireless service, offering it free to guests. A local real estate agent views home listings and prices while touring properties with clients. A local web designer has relocated his office to his boat for the summer. Other current customers include the city administration, large and small businesses, and restaurants. Local public safety agencies and the hospital are in the process of connecting to the network.

In addition to fixed/mobile high-speed Internet access, Ottawa Wireless provides advanced services, such as point-to-point dedicated VPN connections, remote wireless video surveillance, and high-speed access for boaters up to 15 miles offshore and at speeds of up to 55 miles per hour. City-wide mobile WiFi VoIP telephone calling is currently in beta testing with full launch expected in the next few months. Monthly prices for always-on broadband Internet starts at \$19.99 for 256 kbps, and unlimited mobile VoIP calling is \$29.99. Connections up to 1 Mbps and per-day pricing options are also available.

Building the First City-Wide WiFi Network

Ottawa Wireless overcame many technology, right-of-way, and line-of-sight challenges to build the pioneering network across this picturesque town of waterways, tall trees and rolling hills.

Ottawa Wireless partners include Azulstar Networks, Custos Mobile, The City of Grand Haven, Grand Haven Board of Light & Power, LogiSense Corp., Ottawa Electric, Proxim Corp., Telib S.L. and Winncom Technologies. Proxim, a leading provider of wireless equipment, provided the network radios, which include Proxim

ORiNOCO AP-4000 tri-band access points and the Proxim Tsunami MP.11a point-to-multipoint wireless backhaul system.

According to Chris Jones, Proxim senior vice president of worldwide sales and marketing, “The Ottawa Wireless network is a great example of how to effectively provide last-mile broadband access to a community. Not only can it be offered less expensively than DSL and cable, it is also fully mobile and can be rolled out with extreme speed. We have been delighted to participate with a dynamic company like Ottawa Wireless and are excited to continue working with them as they grow their network.”

Source: Ottawa Wireless

Citation: First WiFi City in America: Grand Haven goes Wireless (2004, August 1) retrieved 18 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2004-08-wifi-city-america-grand-haven.html>

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